

This workshop explores the democratic, political, and societal implications of agentic AI – AI systems that act with increasing autonomy, adaptability, and capacity to shape social realities. Moving beyond a narrow focus on AI as a technical tool, the workshop examines how agentic AI reconfigures agency, power, and responsibility across domains such as digital sovereignty, security, hybridisation, and hybrid warfare.

The workshop brings together perspectives from political theory, philosophy, science and technology studies, and perspectives of practitioners. It asks how democratic institutions, norms, and publics can respond to AI systems that increasingly act within and upon social and political orders. Particular attention is paid to questions of governance, accountability, and intergenerational perspectives, as well as to the opportunities and risks agentic AI poses for democratic resilience in hybrid and conflict-prone contexts.

Symposium

Agentic AI in Hybrid Societies

Power, Conflict and Democratic Futures



14.04.2026

Austrian Academy of Sciences
Seminar Room 1
Bäckerstraße 13
1010 Vienna

Program

09:00 - 09:30

Opening Introduction

Barbara Prainsack, Chair DEMGES, Member ÖAW, University of Vienna

Astrid Mager, Vice-Chair DEMGES, Member ÖAW, Institute of Technology Assessment, ÖAW

09:30 - 11:30

Panel 1

Chair: Sylvia Kritzinger, Member DEMGES, University of Vienna

09:30 - 10:30

Andreas Kunar, 4future foundation

When AI Takes Action: Understanding Agentic Systems

10:30 - 11:30

Werner Illsinger, 4future foundation

I am sorry Dave. I am afraid, I cannot do that. AI and Digital Sovereignty

11:30 - 12:00

Coffee Break

12:00 - 13:00

Panel 2

Chair: Nikolaus Forgó, Member DEMGES, University of Vienna

Ilona Kickbusch, Member DEMGES, Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, Geneva

Health - a critical test case for governing a hybrid world

13:00 - 14:00

Lunch Break

14:00 - 16:00

Panel 3

Chair: Martin Kornberger, Member DEMGES, WU Vienna

14:00 - 15:00

Jutta Weber, Paderborn University
A Careless Constructed Machine of Violence. Polycrisis, Technorationality and AI-Based Warfare

15:00 - 16:00

ÖAW Studienstiftung
Challenges and opportunities posted by agentic AI: Perspectives from the younger generations

16:00 - 16:30

Coffee Break

16:30 - 17:30

Panel Discussion

Chair: Christiane Wendehorst, Member DEMGES, President of the Division of Humanities and Social Sciences, ÖAW

Werner Illsinger & Andreas Kunar, 4future foundation

Ilona Kickbusch, Member DEMGES, Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, Geneva
Katta Spiel, TU Wien

17:30 - 18:30

Reception

Abstracts and CVs

[Andreas Kunar](#)

4future foundation

[When AI Takes Action: Understanding Agentic Systems](#)

Agentic AI is transforming our interaction with artificial intelligence – shifting it from generating chat responses to executing autonomous actions. This session explains how machine-learning systems differ from programmed software, what defines machine intelligence, and why agents extend beyond traditional chatbots through capabilities such as tool use, memory, and skills. Practical examples, including coding agents and OpenClaw, provide a grounded foundation for informed discussion.

[Andreas Kunar](#) combines deep technical expertise with extensive leadership experience in marketing and business strategy. Holding a master's-level degree in computer science, he has built a career at the intersection of technology, marketing, and management. During his 15 years at Microsoft, he led various business divisions and served on the Austrian, Swiss, and European leadership teams. Now retired from corporate roles, he focuses on artificial intelligence and leads the AI initiatives at 4future.tech.

[Werner Illsinger](#)

4future foundation

[I am sorry Dave. I am afraid, I cannot do that. AI and Digital Sovereignty](#)

Agentic AI is rapidly moving from theory into real-world decision-making – raising fundamental questions about power, sovereignty, and democratic resilience. This talk explores who controls the digital infrastructure, data, and intelligence layers that increasingly shape our societies, and what this means for Europe's ability to act autonomously. Because the real question is no longer whether AI will have agency – but whether we will.

[Werner Illsinger](#) is a business psychologist (MBA), management consultant, and technology expert with an engineering background. After more than 18 years in leadership roles at Microsoft and senior positions within the IT industry, he founded 4future to actively shape the transformation of business and society in the digital age. He also lectures at Carinthia University of Applied Sciences.

[Ilona Kickbusch](#)

Member DEMGES, Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, Geneva
[Health - a critical test case for governing a hybrid work](#)

Health has become a defining arena for governance in a hybrid world shaped by the

interplay of digital technologies, geopolitical fragmentation, private sector power, and transnational risks. From pandemic preparedness and digital health infrastructures to AI-driven diagnostics and global supply chains, health systems are increasingly embedded in complex public - private and human - machine constellations. This talk argues that health provides a critical test case for developing new governance approaches capable of addressing interdependence, inequality, and sovereignty concerns while safeguarding solidarity, public value, and democratic accountability in an era of accelerating technological and political transformation.

[Ilona Kickbusch](#) is a leading international expert on global health. After studying political science and sociology at the University of Konstanz, she began her career at the World Health Organization (WHO), where her work included initiating the Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion. Following her time at the WHO, she headed the Global Health Program at Yale University and later founded the Global Health Centre in Geneva.

[Jutta Weber](#)

Paderborn University

[A Careless Constructed Machine of Violence. Polycrisis, Technorationality and AI-Based Warfare](#)

The lecture will analyse the development, epistemic logic and materiality of AI-based warfare, as well as its consequences, using examples from the US 'War on Terror' and the Gaza War. Secondly, it will briefly discuss Europe's high-tech AI military build-up in response not only to Russia's war against Ukraine, but also to the changing, multipolar world and its accelerating polycrisis.

[Jutta Weber](#) is a STS scholar and professor of media, culture & society at the Institute of Media Studies at Paderborn University, Germany. Her research focuses on computational technoscience culture(s) asking how and for whom the non/human actors work. She is head of the BMBF research network 'Meaningful Human Control. Autonomous Weapon Systems between Reflection and Regulation' (MEHUCO).

For more see <https://juttaweber.eu> as well as <https://meaningfulhumancontrol.de>

[ÖAW Studienstiftung](#)

[Challenges and opportunities posted by agentic AI: Perspectives from the younger generations](#)

In brief hypotheses, students of the Austrian Study Foundation will highlight societal consequences of agentic AI. Which risks are we willing to take - and what might future generations think about current developments?

Katta Spiel
TU Wien

Katta Spiel is an Assistant Professor for Critical Access in Embodied Computing at TU Wien Informatics. They research marginalized perspectives on embodied computing through a lens of Critical Access. Their work informs design and engineering, supporting the development of technologies that account for the diverse realities they operate in. In their interdisciplinary collaborations with neurodivergent and/or nonbinary peers, they conduct explorations of novel potentials for designs, methodologies, and innovative technological artifacts.

ORGANIZER

Commission Democracy in Digital Societies (DEMGES)

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REGISTRATION

Registration until 09.04.2026: demges@oeaw.ac.at

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